

National Flood Insurance Program (NFIP) response in Bucks County has been integrated into a flood plain that is constantly being redefined. Maps need to be perpetually updated due to changes in geography, construction and mitigation activities, and meteorological events.

During the Bucks County floods of September, 2004, April, 2005 and June, 2006, FEMA has worked well with local and state emergency management officials.

FEMA came into the area for damage assessment – along with PEMA – within a day or two. Our emergency management director, John D. Dougherty, Jr., supervised the respective site inspections. The FEMA and PEMA officials agreed with our assessment, and we got the disaster declaration quickly.

They also worked well with Bucks County on getting the Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) up and running quickly following each flood event. During the recovery process of the June, 2006 flood, 153 DRC visitors were able perform “one-stop shopping” services as processing low-interest loan applications through the Small Business Administration (SBA), receiving assistance with Disaster Unemployment Assistance, Federal and state disaster tax assistance, and finding cost effective measures for reducing the impact of future flooding and disaster losses. The DRC also offered floodplain rebuilding advice, as well as American Red Cross referrals.

County departments represented at the DRC included Health (which offered well-test kits and tetanus shots), Mental Health (counseling), Area Agency on Aging (senior concerns) and Emergency Management.

During the September, 2004 storm, we had a problem with some of the dollar amounts FEMA was using for temporary housing and repairs because they were using figures from Philadelphia that were much less than those in Bucks County. Once we got with PEMA and brought it to FEMA’s attention, they made the needed changes.

One of the biggest NFIP problems that we see is the outdated nature of a lot of the flood maps. We also see a significant need for more public service announcements noting the 30-day wait period. We need as many resources as possible to help our citizens “BUY EARLY!”

In Bucks County, we have had enormous success with the Neshaminy Creek elevation program that was implemented by the National Resources Conservation Service. During each of the three floods, houses that were elevated through this program were spared from structural damage to their living space and utility infrastructure. Elevated residents simply swept water out of their concrete-shell basements.

Also along the Neshaminy Creek watershed, Bucks County’s Community Alert Network (CAN) uses five water-level gauges to notify residents of rising creek levels. The CAN system provides a model for implementation within Delaware River communities, as well. Already, it has created a phone bank that is triangulated with zip codes of communities within the Delaware River flood plain. The next phase of CAN implementation involves coordination with a Geographic Information System (GIS), which will make the old zip code system obsolete.

As a first step to understanding this frequent flooding dynamic, we urge the Senate to pass legislation introduced by Congressman Michael G. Fitzpatrick (8<sup>th</sup> Dist., PA) and

subsequently passed by the House of Representatives authorizing the Army Corps of Engineers to conduct a study of the Delaware River Basin. Such a study would provide an invaluable data baseline. Additionally, it would help government officials at all levels to coordinate flood mitigation planning.